

Assembly Bill No. 955

CHAPTER 494

An act to amend Section 3304 of the Government Code, relating to public safety officers.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2009. Filed with
Secretary of State October 11, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 955, De Leon. Public Safety Officers Procedural Bill of Rights Act: discipline.

The Public Safety Officers Procedural Bill of Rights Act prohibits any punitive action, or denial of promotion on grounds other than merit, to be undertaken for any act, omission, or other allegation of misconduct if an investigation of an allegation against a public safety officer is not completed within one year of the public agency's discovery by a person authorized to initiate an investigation of the allegation of an act, omission, or other misconduct that occurred on or after January 1, 1998. Existing law requires the public agency to complete its investigation and notify the public safety officer of its proposed disciplinary action within that year if it determines that discipline may be taken.

This bill would instead specify that the discovery could be made by a person authorized to initiate an investigation of the allegation of an act, omission, or other misconduct, and require the public agency, within that year, to notify the public safety officer of the proposed discipline by a specified letter or notice articulating the discipline. This bill would specify that the public agency is not required to impose the discipline within that year.

To the extent that these new requirements would apply to local government employers, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 3304 of the Government Code is amended to read:

3304. (a) No public safety officer shall be subjected to punitive action, or denied promotion, or be threatened with any such treatment, because of

the lawful exercise of the rights granted under this chapter, or the exercise of any rights under any existing administrative grievance procedure.

Nothing in this section shall preclude a head of an agency from ordering a public safety officer to cooperate with other agencies involved in criminal investigations. If an officer fails to comply with such an order, the agency may officially charge him or her with insubordination.

(b) No punitive action, nor denial of promotion on grounds other than merit, shall be undertaken by any public agency against any public safety officer who has successfully completed the probationary period that may be required by his or her employing agency without providing the public safety officer with an opportunity for administrative appeal.

(c) No chief of police may be removed by a public agency, or appointing authority, without providing the chief of police with written notice and the reason or reasons therefor and an opportunity for administrative appeal.

For purposes of this subdivision, the removal of a chief of police by a public agency or appointing authority, for the purpose of implementing the goals or policies, or both, of the public agency or appointing authority, for reasons including, but not limited to, incompatibility of management styles or as a result of a change in administration, shall be sufficient to constitute "reason or reasons."

Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to create a property interest, where one does not exist by rule or law, in the job of Chief of Police.

(d) (1) Except as provided in this subdivision and subdivision (g), no punitive action, nor denial of promotion on grounds other than merit, shall be undertaken for any act, omission, or other allegation of misconduct if the investigation of the allegation is not completed within one year of the public agency's discovery by a person authorized to initiate an investigation of the allegation of an act, omission, or other misconduct. This one-year limitation period shall apply only if the act, omission, or other misconduct occurred on or after January 1, 1998. In the event that the public agency determines that discipline may be taken, it shall complete its investigation and notify the public safety officer of its proposed discipline by a Letter of Intent or Notice of Adverse Action articulating the discipline that year, except as provided in paragraph (2). The public agency shall not be required to impose the discipline within that one-year period.

(2) (A) If the act, omission, or other allegation of misconduct is also the subject of a criminal investigation or criminal prosecution, the time during which the criminal investigation or criminal prosecution is pending shall toll the one-year time period.

(B) If the public safety officer waives the one-year time period in writing, the time period shall be tolled for the period of time specified in the written waiver.

(C) If the investigation is a multijurisdictional investigation that requires a reasonable extension for coordination of the involved agencies.

(D) If the investigation involves more than one employee and requires a reasonable extension.

(E) If the investigation involves an employee who is incapacitated or otherwise unavailable.

(F) If the investigation involves a matter in civil litigation where the public safety officer is named as a party defendant, the one-year time period shall be tolled while that civil action is pending.

(G) If the investigation involves a matter in criminal litigation where the complainant is a criminal defendant, the one-year time period shall be tolled during the period of that defendant's criminal investigation and prosecution.

(H) If the investigation involves an allegation of workers' compensation fraud on the part of the public safety officer.

(e) Where a predisciplinary response or grievance procedure is required or utilized, the time for this response or procedure shall not be governed or limited by this chapter.

(f) If, after investigation and any predisciplinary response or procedure, the public agency decides to impose discipline, the public agency shall notify the public safety officer in writing of its decision to impose discipline, including the date that the discipline will be imposed, within 30 days of its decision, except if the public safety officer is unavailable for discipline.

(g) Notwithstanding the one-year time period specified in subdivision (d), an investigation may be reopened against a public safety officer if both of the following circumstances exist:

(1) Significant new evidence has been discovered that is likely to affect the outcome of the investigation.

(2) One of the following conditions exist:

(A) The evidence could not reasonably have been discovered in the normal course of investigation without resorting to extraordinary measures by the agency.

(B) The evidence resulted from the public safety officer's predisciplinary response or procedure.

(h) For those members listed in subdivision (a) of Section 830.2 of the Penal Code, the 30-day time period provided for in subdivision (f) shall not commence with the service of a preliminary notice of adverse action, should the public agency elect to provide the public safety officer with such a notice.

SEC. 2. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.